1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

584 in the same district, the background of the young man is well enough known so that no investigation is necessary, though unfailingly a long and formal discussion of the suitor, his qualities, and his prospects ensues. If his home is some distance away, however, meticulous inquiries are made not only concerning the young man and his immediate family, but of his ancestry as well. Should the suitor live near the home of the young woman, as usually happens, his own parents come with a *lettre de demand*. In earlier days the "letter" was written on flowered paper with a lacy border, but today plain colored paper does very well. When presented, it is wrapped in a green silk handkerchief, "for hope" — the handkerchief costs about five gourdes, and a similar amount is given the scribe — and is usually carried by the oldest man of the family; that is to say, the paternal grandfather if living, or if he is dead, the father, accompanied by the mother and perhaps the other grandparents. Today it is said that in the valley of Mirebalais the custom of presenting these letters of request is often disregarded, but is by no means extinct.[1]

584 212 [603] [822] [178]

The family of the girl is always apprised of the exact time of the visit, and refreshments are on hand. No reply is given at the time of the delivery of the "letter," since the families of both the father and the mother of the girl must consent to the match before it can be finally approved. However, at the stage of the courtship which the presentation of a "letter" implies, this delayed answer is a matter of form, for if the proposal had not been acceptable, the girl would not have been allowed to see the suitor. The refusal of a "letter" has been known to occur, but this is regarded as a deadly insult, and deep enmity between the families follows. Should the family of the girl, not wishing to be abrupt, accept the "letter" and proffer refreshments to its bearers, but later return the same "letter" as a sign of rejection, even this would be bitterly resented. Under such circumstances the young man takes steps to obtain revenge by providing himself with a

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1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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love-charm designed to insure the young girl's coming to him. He then uses all persuasion to give her a child and, this achieved, abandons her to show his contempt for the family that has formally refused to accept him as a son-in-law.

Usually, however, the visit is returned by the family of the girl, bearing a "response" of acceptance wrapped in a red silk handkerchief, "for victory." And just as the family of the young woman had known in advance of the coming of her suitor's relatives, word of the favorable verdict is now sent through indirect channels, so that the family of the young man may also be prepared to receive the emissaries who come on behalf of the girl.

With this formal acceptance of the young man's suit, the wedding waits until he has accumulated the requisites for a household. Custom dictates that even should he be prepared, the ceremony must be delayed for several months while he remains in a probationary state, to assure the family of his fiancée of his worthiness. The young woman is also under surveillance during this time, when she may be asked to help her future mother-in-law with the housework, and particularly with the washing and ironing of linens. Generally a period of from two to three years elapses before the bridegroom accumulates enough to fulfill his obligations in marriage. During this time the family of the young woman is acquiring the things she is expected to bring to her husband: linens and dishes — though in the poorer peasant families these items would not be provided her — cooking utensils, water-containers, knives, forks, and other things needed for the household. Her father also presents her with a horse, a donkey, six or seven pigs, the same number of goats, as well as chickens, guinea-hens, and turkeys.

Tokens of virginity are not demanded before the match, since Mirebalais custom requires that the girl tell before her marriage whether she has had relations with other men. She may be sent away if it is discovered that she has told an un-

[P. 338]

4. Notes on Orthography

104 191 87 114 [212] The problem of putting the Creole language into writing has confronted Haitian and non-Haitian scholars and writers for some time. During the past decade the problem has been an acute one for education authorities in Haiti. While there developed a consensus that teaching the largely illiterate population would have to be done in Creole and not in French, there remained a controversy about the system of orthography that should be used. One of the first attempts to teach Haitian children in their own language was made by Christian Beaulieu, a Haitian educator who worked out a written method based on traditional French orthography.[1] Subsequently, a simpler system was devised by a clergyman, the Reverend H. Ormond McConnell. Although it had numerous detractors among those who favored French orthography, it was found to be far more suitable for educational purposes. The American linguist Robert A. Hall, Jr., carried out a study, the findings of which supported the McConnell method as "perfectly phonemic and at the same time wholly practicable in that it uses only characters already available in print shops and on typewriters."[2]

104 [114] Some Creole texts from Haiti and other West Indian islands, taken down by researchers and scholars, have been transcribed in the McConnell orthography, or in a modified one known as the McConnell-Laubach system. It is my opinion that although the system is admirable for teaching purposes, and adequate for recording texts for scholarly needs, it is a disadvantage to a reader who has a French vocabulary at his command but who is not familiar with the McConnell orthography. The extent to which this system can disguise a language is easily seen if it is used, for example, to transcribe Jamaican speech. The effect is identical on French words or words of French origin. The Haitian proverb "Run from the rain, fall into the big river" is written by Hall in the McConnell-Laubach orthography: *Kouri pou-lapli, tòbé nd-grd*

1 [UNESCO, The Haiti Pilot Project, P. 39. Cf. P. 355, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2 [Ibid. Cf. P. 355, Category 116 - Analyst]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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American masters, had nearly stood still. For almost a century, Haiti's elite had taken justifiable pride in their ancestors' triumph over Napoleonic France, even while they remained enthralled by French culture. This strange ambivalence would no longer do. In effect, the United States occupation compelled Haitian scholars to rediscover what it meant to be Haitian.

As the writing of Jean Price-Mars (1928) expressed that identity culturally, so the regime of Dumarsais Estimé began to express it politically. For the first time, Africa, and not simply France, became an important part of the nationalist dialogue. The Creole language began to be studied in its own right, and a program to end illiteracy through education in Creole was launched. Folkloristic studies, emphasizing the African component in Haitian rural life, especially as expressed in religion, came into vogue. Haitians began to explore their own society as a synthesis that was as much African as it was French—and as a synthesis, rather than as a mechanical alignment of two distinct traditions. The term *authentique* was employed to express what was "truly Haitian," and Haiti herself was viewed as a unique and original blending of two pasts. Under Estimé, rural folk of promise—and they were, in the nature of things, predominantly dark-skinned—were given greater opportunities, especially to be educated and to enter government service. Moreover, these developments took place at a time when Haiti's economic situation was relatively good, and Estimé enjoyed a measure of popular support rare in Haiti's entire history.

Furthermore, it was during the Estimé regime that Haitian cultural life reached some sort of climax. In the 1920s young Haitian intellectuals had been deeply shaken by the United States occupation and had begun to formulate their own answers to the questions it raised. Not only did Africa come into view as the wellspring of much that was Haitian but Haiti's status as an occupied though once-sovereign power dramatized the need for a social and political philosophy that fitted with hemispheric and international realities. French intellectual currents figured importantly in Haitian political thinking, both because the intellectuals of the French Antilles of the time were inspired by Haitian history and interested in Haiti, and because those islands and Haiti shared a curious affinity in their "Gallo-African" cultures. Anticolonial and Marxist points of view were espoused by a few Haitians, but these perspectives were complicated by changing

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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175 were abolished; with such concessions the people must be satisfied.
566 Dessalines tacitly confessed his inability to follow any course but the French colonial system, with modifications introduced by Toussaint.

167 Many of the blacks, having tasted a moment's freedom, were not
175 inclined to give it up. Before the new order of Dessalines was firmly established, therefore, they ran away with their families into the hills, where they escaped official notice. As squatters they lived out their lives unmolested. By the time they were officially rediscovered, all Haiti had become a land of peasants.

175 At the other end of the ladder from the laborers were the officials,
463 who might be great men or small clerks, members of the entourage
555 of the governor-general or merely overseers of a plantation. In order
647 to keep the vast agricultural economy functioning smoothly it was
565 necessary to have hundreds of agents, directors, clerks, and overseers, each of whom must report to a superior. In this official class there was at least a possibility of realizing an ambition for oneself; there was a basis of comparison; more important, there was some possibility of attracting favorable attention of persons in high places and so of gaining promotion. Inevitably something of the colonial state of mind must have carried over into the new era, so that an ex-slave would consider himself as having risen in the world to be now performing a task which only white men used to do—to be spared field labor and to direct the work of others. Out of this group of petty agents rose a few men of ambition who were later to belong to the élite.

175 Higher officers of state were in a much more favorable position to
565 achieve social eminence. Not only did they perform no manual
647 labor; they were twice removed from that life, since they directed the men who directed the workers. They handled funds. They came
• [212] into contact with Dessalines himself. Many former gens de couleur filled these important posts, for the number of Haitians who could read and write was woefully limited.

175 The army was the great power in the country, for the new state
701 was a military one. Since fear of a return of the French required the maintenance of a large standing army,[4] Dessalines made a virtue of this apparent necessity, using his soldiers to enforce discipline among the cultivators. On whom else could he rely for his local administra-

t. 100

4. Humboldt estimated that the army of Dessalines numbered 37,300, which would be one tenth of the total population. Other estimates run as low as 15,000. Even this figure would be about a tenth of the male population.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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unplanned, undesired

Haitian peasantry, to sum up, began as the result of two policies intended to achieve ends quite different; first, presidential gifts of land, the chief purpose of which had been to pay the soldiers of the republic; and second, the crop-sharing system adopted by landlords after the failure of Boyer's Code.

6. *The Drawing of Caste Lines (1820–1843)*

Almost every major presidential aim of Boyer came to grief. His tranquil quarter-century rule, the unified island, the financial surplus with which his presidency began, the peace with France after 1825—all these advantages combined with his good intentions did not save his projects from shipwreck. Near the beginning of his régime he announced that, like his revered predecessor Pétion, he felt the safety of Haiti to lie in the abolition of all color distinctions and prejudices. Just as his great Code Rural proved a complete failure, however, so did his efforts to do away with the color line. On the contrary, it was during Boyer's time that class distinctions became fixed, in large part although not wholly, on the basis of color.

Stating that the policy of his government was to put an end, as far as possible, to jealousies of caste, he consistently for a few years promoted a black every time a promotion had been given to a mulatto or other light-skinned person. This procedure soon met an insuperable obstacle. Government posts in general required literacy, and only a very small number of blacks were educated, so that the supply of Negroes was not sufficient to furnish him with candidates. Since one of the few roads to lucrative success lay in official positions, ambitious young colored men sought eagerly for government office, and Boyer soon had no alternative but to advance men of his own complexion. In the army, on the other hand, literacy was not necessary for promotion. Ambitious Negro youths, therefore, frequently chose this career which, while not very profitable in monetary rewards, at least gave a man a certain social status and economic security.

Because of the state of education in the republic, consequently, an ugly situation developed, with the civil arm of government almost wholly in control of the colored element and the military force dominated by blacks. Fortunately for the country no crisis developed during the 1820's and 1830's which made an open breach between army and state.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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Only a beginning has been made of collecting the thousands of "Cric? Crac!" stories current in Haiti.

It is only recently that people have written Créole, so that there is no standard orthography. Every writer spells words phonetically, with consequent irregularities, and with wide differences between two people writing the same thing. Recent etymological studies may lead eventually to a dictionary and a standard spelling. In order that the reader may see the resemblance of Créole to French, yet its differences from that language, we shall quote a part of one of La Fontaine's fables put into Créole verse by Georges Sylvain.[10] His own French retranslation accompanies the fable, turning such phrases as "female pig" into "sow."

Nan temps toutt bett té palé,	*Au temps où toutes les bêtes parlaient,*
Té g'ain (palant pa respé)	*Il y avait (sauf votre respect)*
Té g'ain gnou fémel cochon.	*Il y avait une truie.*
Zott connin gen cochon bon?	*Vous savez comme les truies sont bonnes gens?*
Cila-là té fait zanmi	*Celle-ci avait fait amitié*
Avec gnou fémel chien, qui	*Avec une chienne, qui*
Té prett pou mi bas. Chien-là,	*Était sur le point de mettre bas. La chienne*
Gnou jou, dit cochon con ça:	*Un jour, dit à la truie:*
"Moin pré pou moin accouché,	*"Me voilà près d'accoucher,*
"Ma conmé, t'en pri! souplé,	*"Ma commère, je vous en prie, s'il vous plaît,*
"Pémett moin prété gnou coin	*"Permettez-moi d'emprunter un coin*
"Nan pac ou, pou pititt moin."	*"De votre parc, pour mes enfants."*[11]

The terseness of the language is fascinating, a situation is hit off precisely in a few words: a stuffed shirt has been deflated, and the truth has been told. A Haitian was heard to say, "Nègue riche li mulatte; mulatte pauvre li nègue"—a rich Negro is accounted a mulatto; a poor mulatto is to all intents and purposes no better than a Negro. And there is a profound comment on the whole caste system.

Wherever the French went in the Caribbean region the Créole language spread—in Louisiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana. Each region has its own peculiarities, but in general it may be said that these other regions show much more French (as distinct from Norman) influence on Créole, and much less Spanish and English influence. Similarly in Haitian towns, where the élite speak French

10. *Cric? Crac! Fables de La Fontaine racontées par un montagnard haïtien et transcrites en vers créoles* (Port-au-Prince, 1929), p. 21.

11. "Zott" means "vous autres"; "gnou" is "une."